



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Regarding Recent Elections in the OSCE Area

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We are pleased to be able to draw attention to some positive developments in several participating States in the field of elections. The OSCE election observation reports preliminary presented assessing the recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Latvia reflect greater implementation of OSCE commitments.

This is a genuine achievement for all of these countries, but I would like to highlight in particular the achievements of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The October 1st elections were the first to be fully administered by the country's authorities since the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The elections were generally well organized and administered. Although they did not meet all OSCE commitments, the elections demonstrated real progress towards the consolidation of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note that the OSCE report highlights a number of areas where improvements could be made, including procedural irregularities in the counting process. We encourage the authorities to follow up on these issues. The quality of any election, we all know, goes well beyond the polling process, and also includes continuing registration, media coverage, and ensuring voter rights, among other efforts.

On October 5th Georgia's municipal elections were conducted with general respect for fundamental freedoms. Significant progress was noted by the OSCE mission in the conduct of voting and the establishment of effective local democracy. However, ODIHR also noted with concern the insufficient distinction between the authorities and the governing party, concluding that this reinforced the advantage of incumbents. We encourage the Government of Georgia to study the OSCE recommendations carefully, with a view to making further improvements in their electoral process.

As was the case in the 2002 in Latvia, elections held on October 7th met most OSCE commitments. According to the OSCE observation report, the elections were administered transparently and professionally, and allowed the voters to elect the representatives of their choice. We congratulate the people of Latvia for that. The report noted, however, that Latvian authorities have not implemented some previous OSCE recommendations on issues affecting the election process, particularly with respect to the significant number of "non-citizens" in the country who do not have voting rights. We encourage the Latvian authorities to take steps to ensure the fullest possible participation in elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.